

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE

APPOINTED BY THE TREASURY TO ENQUIRE INTO THE ACCELERATION

OF THE

IRISH DAY MAILS.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



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1898.

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I N D E X.

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REPORT (No. 1) SIGNED BY MR. T. ROBERTSON (Chairman) AND MR. P. O'BRIEN, M.P.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIPS,

By Treasury Letter of the 6th December 1897, we are directed to enquire :-

- " 1. To what extent and in what way, the Irish Day Mail Train Service can be accelerated.
2. Whether such acceleration is desirable on Postal grounds.
3. What number of stoppages should be required, and at what places.
4. What will be the probable cost of any acceleration which the Committee may propose.
5. If such acceleration should involve increased expense, what portion, if any, of such increased expense should fairly be borne by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company as benefiting through the alteration by the transfer to their boats of traffic now carried by other vessels.
6. The Committee should further consider in any recommendation which they make for alteration of hours of the Day Mail to and from Ireland, what effect such alteration will have on the mails in other parts of the United Kingdom, and whether it will sever the connections which the Irish Mail Train now maintains with places either to the south or to the north of the main line; whether the effect of these alterations will place any towns or districts under new inconveniences, either as regards passengers or mails, and, if so, whether such inconveniences can be either removed or reduced by corresponding alterations in other train services, and at what cost.
7. Before recommending any alterations the Committee should ascertain from the proper officers of the Post Office the effect of such alterations on the working of the mails generally, and should attach due weight to any reasonable objection which may be raised by those officers.
8. In the event of the Committee reporting that no acceleration of the Mail Train is desirable, my Lords would be glad if they would consider how far it is advisable to secure a faster and more convenient passenger service irrespective of postal considerations."

It may be convenient to preface our Report by a brief history of the relations between the Government and the present parties to the Irish Mails Contract, and by some account of the circumstances which have led up to the appointment of the present Committee.

On various occasions after the Union, the attention of Parliament was turned to the state of communication between England and Ireland, Committees were appointed at different times between 1810 and 1842 to suggest improvements, large sums were expended under the sanction of Parliament in the formation of roads between London and Holyhead, in the construction of the Menai Bridge, and in the construction of harbours on both sides of the Channel. Packets were established for the conveyance of mails and passengers, and in 1845 there were no fewer than four distinct services performed by a fleet of 20 packets in Her Majesty's service, between Milford and Waterford, Holyhead and Kingstown, Donaghadee and Port Patrick, and Liverpool and Kingstown. By the opening of the Chester and Holyhead Railway in May 1848, and the subsequent completion of the Tubular Bridge across the Menai Straits, Holyhead became the point of embarkation for the greater proportion of the Irish passengers and mails, and up to the commencement of the year 1850, great efforts were made to perform the service with the utmost possible efficiency. In the words of a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1853 (Parliamentary Paper 747

of 1853), "it cannot therefore be doubted, that since the Union the establishment and maintenance of the best and speediest means of communication between the two countries has been regarded as a paramount duty of Government."

In 1848 Lord Auckland, then First Lord of the Admiralty, stated that, as a general principle, he was of opinion that the Packet service might be more cheaply done by contractors, though the Government Service was more efficient and certain; and the Select Committee on Army Navy and Ordnance Estimates, before which this evidence was given, recommended the contract system on the grounds of economy. Accordingly, on the 30th April, 1850, the mails ceased to be conveyed by Her Majesty's Ships, and the service between Holyhead and Dublin (Kingstown and Howth) was carried on by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, under a contract dated 9th April, 1850, at a cost of £25,000 a year. The same service had cost from £35,000 to £40,000 a year under Government management (Parliamentary Paper 1005 of 1853), but the new arrangement gave rise to much complaint. The speed diminished and the inadequate accommodation for passengers was "a perpetual source of complaint; ladies are described as frequently being obliged to lie on the floor in such numbers as to render it impossible to move about the over-crowded cabins." A Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed on the 12th May, 1853, to report on this Holyhead service "as regards the expeditious conveyance of the mails, transport of troops, and the convenience afforded to the public, and the Irish Representatives in particular, in their attendance on this House; and to report what improvements modern science can suggest to establish a more speedy and commodious communication between the two Capitals." The Committee recommended an accelerated service by land and sea, reducing the journey between London and Dublin from 14 to 15 hours (the time then occupied) to 11 hours.

The Contract with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, nevertheless, remained unaltered till 1860. Meanwhile negotiations had been proceeding with the London and North Western Railway and the Chester and Holyhead Railway Companies. The Chester and Holyhead Railway Act of 1848 empowered that Company (which had been authorised by an Act of 1844, and a large proportion of whose share capital was held by the London and North Western Railway Company) to run steamboats between Holyhead and Dublin. In 1855 was passed "An Act for improving the Postal and Passenger Communication between England and Ireland and for authorising arrangements between certain companies in England and Ireland in relation thereto; and for other purposes." This (private) Act enabled the London and North Western Railway Company, the Chester and Holyhead Company, and the City of Dublin Company to provide "such additional steam boats for the conveyance of mails and passengers between Holyhead and Kingstown or Howth as they shall think fit, or otherwise it shall be lawful for those railway companies or either of them to contract and agree with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company to provide from time to time such additional steamboats as aforesaid," upon such terms as might be mutually agreed upon. The sea service was to be restricted to Passenger, Postal, and Parcel Traffic. The Companies were empowered to make "any Agreements and Arrangements with Her Majesty's Postmaster General, or with the Lords of the Admiralty, in reference to the Conveyance in their steam boats of Her Majesty's Mails or Post Letter Bags between Holyhead and Kingstown or Howth; provided always that until an agreement or arrangement for the purposes hereinbefore in this Clause mentioned shall have been so made and entered into, none of the Powers by this Act granted shall be exercised by the said Companies, and that, unless such an Agreement or Arrangement shall have been made and entered into on or before 1st May, 1860, it shall not be lawful for the said Companies in pursuance of this Act, to exercise any of the Powers granted thereby, and such Powers shall thereafter cease and have no effect."

A Treasury Minute of 19th October, 1855 (Parliamentary Paper 27 of 1855), after quoting this section of the Act, states: "My Lords fully recognise the main motive which the Legislature had in passing this Act . . . the hope that, by the combination so created, a more efficient steamboat service would be established between Holyhead and Dublin, thus connecting England and Ireland by the shortest possible passage, and in the shortest possible time, with a view to their postal and passenger communication. But, so far did the Legislature recognise in any such arrangement the paramount importance of the postal service, that the clause already quoted was introduced into the Bill, by which the powers granted under it should

only take effect in the event of the united Companies being able to make an arrangement with the Postmaster-General or the Admiralty for the conveyance of the Mails."

The Minute goes on to say that importance must also be attached to "the enormous social and political advantages which may be expected to be derived from such an improved communication between the two countries as the progress of art and science entitles the public to look for," as also to the "great advantage and convenience" to Irish Members of Parliament. The existing services gave postal communication twice a day, in either direction, leaving London at 5 p.m. and 8.45 p.m., and leaving Dublin at 1.30 p.m. and 7 p.m.

"In taking a review of the whole question, as it now stands, it appears to my Lords that, in order to justify such a public expenditure as would ensure the quickest possible communication, twice a day, it is imperative that some great advantage in postal arrangements over those at present in use shall be gained, and that security shall be taken in any contract to be made for such a revision from time to time of the service as shall keep it up to the highest point of perfection which any improvements hereafter to be made may render practicable; and that the public interests shall not be made merely subservient to the advantages of the Shareholders in the Companies referred to, under the plea that they are promoting the convenience of passengers." Provided, therefore, that a service with a maximum of 11 hours from station to station were insured their Lordships were of opinion that, "if arrangements can be made which shall secure the (postal) advantages hereinafter described they will be justified in giving up the existing contract with the City of Dublin Company, and incurring a considerably increased expenditure for a new contract with the United Companies under the Act referred to."

In 1858 the Chester and Holyhead line became the property of the London and North Western Railway Company. On the 3rd January, 1859, was completed the first Irish Mail Contract (See Parliamentary Paper 138 of 1859). Under this contract the payments were:

To London and North Western Railway Company	-	£20,000 a year
„ Chester and Holyhead Company	- - -	£20,000 „
„ City of Dublin Company	- - -	£85,000 „
Total	- -	<u>£135,000</u>

The City of Dublin Company was to repay the Government one half of gross receipts above £35,000; and if it received permission to carry cattle and other goods, the sum of £85,000 was to be reduced by one half the gross receipts from such traffic.

By Clause 3 of the Agreement the special mail trains between London and Holyhead were to be confined to mails to and from Ireland so long only as the contractors carry traffic exclusively to and from Ireland. The new Irish Postal Service commenced on the 1st October, 1860, its duration was for 14 years, and thereafter subject to 12 months' notice.

The joint contract continued till 1883 when it was terminated by the Government and fresh separate contracts with the Packet Company and the Railway Company were made.

The contract with the City of Dublin Company dated 20th August, 1883, provided for an acceleration of twenty minutes on the down sea journey, and ten minutes on the up sea journey (the times being 4h. 27m. outward, 4h. 12m. inward, till 1st October, 1885, and thenceforward 4h. 7m., 4h. 2m., to include embarkation and landing). The subsidy was reduced to £84,000 per annum, subject to the same condition, that the Government should receive one half of the gross receipts above £35,000. The contract was to hold good till 30th September, 1895.

On the 29th September, 1883, a new contract (terminable on 30th September, 1895 or thereafter at 12 months' notice) was made with the London and North Western Railway Company, under which contingent provision was made for the night and

day mails in both directions being accelerated by half an hour. The cost of the service (£57,500 a year) was subsequently increased to £63,000 a year as the result of the half hours' acceleration. On the 1st May, 1897, the night mail trains were again accelerated half an hour in each direction. The additional cost of this measure was £5,150 a year. The present contract with the London and North Western Railway Company is the Agreement of the 29th September, 1883, as modified by the agreement of 1st April, 1897 (which has not been embodied in a formal contract).

Meanwhile a new contract had been made with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company dated 1st July, 1895. The sea service has been reduced to 3h. 37m. outward, 3h. 32m. inward, including transfer at Kingstown and Holyhead. The subsidy until 31st March, 1917, is £100,000 a year, and thenceforward £80,000 a year, the company to pay the Postmaster General £2,000 a year in lieu of passenger receipts. The contract extends to 31st March, 1917, or thereafter, subject to 12 months' notice.

On the 13th July, 1897, a deputation of 68 Irish Members of Parliament waited upon the Postmaster General and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and represented the importance of developing the tourist traffic in Ireland, and generally of opening up the country to improved intercourse with England by means of more convenient communication. The morning mails leaving Euston at 7.15 a.m. and Dublin at 7.10 a.m., were represented to be too early for tourists, and a request was put forward for a departure about 8.30 a.m. from Euston and Kingstown. A similar request had already been put forward by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, and the night mails having recently been accelerated, the Government decided to appoint this Committee to enquire into the question of the acceleration of the day mails.

On the 14th, 15th and 16th December we held meetings in Dublin in order to ascertain the opinions held in Ireland upon the subject. We examined representatives of the Dublin and Cork Chambers of Commerce, also on a later occasion the representatives of the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce. The Committee had now before it two conflicting proposals, one emanating from Dublin and involving a departure from Kingstown at 8.30 a.m. (instead of 7.30 a.m.) to suit the convenience of morning passengers from Dublin—the other, favoured by Cork, Derry, and Newry, for a departure from Dublin at 3 a.m. in connection with the night mail from the South of Ireland.

We may say at once as regards the proposal of the Cork Chamber of Commerce, that it could not be adopted without accelerating at enormous cost all the night mails from the provinces into Dublin, and in fact recasting the night mail service of the whole country. The advantage after all, even postally, is problematical; for it would be found that an earlier departure from Dublin than 5 a.m. would not in any case be practicable, and the result would be an arrival in London about 3 p.m., and not at mid-day as contemplated, with an actual delivery of the letters too late for business purposes.

On the 12th, 13th, and 14th January the Committee again assembled in Ireland, after an interval to allow the Post Office to consider the proposed changes, and their effect on the mail service. Evidence was now taken from the managers of the principal Irish railways, viz., the Great Southern and Western, the Great Northern, the Midland Great Western, the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford, and the Waterford, Limerick and Western Railway, as to the effect of the suggested alterations upon the connecting trains on these systems, and from representatives of the public generally. So far as a later departure from London is concerned, it was ascertained that the present mail arriving in Dublin at 5.17 p.m. (English time) connected with an important train leaving Dublin on the Great Northern Railway at 5.30 p.m. Irish time, 5.55 p.m. English time, for Belfast, and that any later arrival might interfere with this connection. There is some difficulty in putting the train back beyond 15 minutes or so owing to the importance of the connections with the Dundalk and Enniskillen branch, and the North West of Ireland, as well as the connection with the Scotch Mail steamer from Belfast, which carries mails from Ireland to Scotland, and leaves Belfast at 8.30 p.m., half an hour after the arrival of the Great Northern train at that city, but the case will now be met by the assistance given from the acceleration of the sea journey.

At the same time we took evidence from the various post office witnesses, who maintained the necessity of preserving the present hours of the morning train from

London, in order that the great amount of correspondence from the Continent and from English provincial towns may be delivered in Liverpool, Manchester, and other large centres in the North of England, without undue delay. It was stated that a later arrival in Dublin by three-quarters of an hour or more would cause serious delay in dealing with English letters and parcels which could not be got over except by means of an increase of force which would cost probably 1,100*l.* a year.

On the other hand there is the evidence of other witnesses, including the members of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, also the evidence of Mr. Geoghegan, of Blackrock, showing that no disadvantage would accrue from any later delivery of this nature, the present delivery being too late for business hours. As regards a later arrival in London, we were informed that under the present limitations of force and of space at the General Post Office with any later arrival of the Irish Mail, it would be impossible for the letters to be sorted and despatched in time for the night mails to the Continent and elsewhere. We were thus confronted with the problem of reconciling a maintenance of existing mail services with the desire for a later departure from Euston and Dublin.

The London and North Western Railway Company were, therefore, approached with a request for estimates of the cost of running an accelerated mail train from Euston to Holyhead leaving at 8.30, while maintaining the present 7.15 a.m. train as far as Crewe, and also of similarly accelerating the up day mail train. The Company informed us that the cost of such an arrangement would be (a) £13,877 a year, with 30 minutes acceleration; (b) £15,252 a year, with 45 minutes acceleration. The corresponding accelerations of the existing up mail from Holyhead to Euston would cost (a) £2,750, (b) £4,125 a year.

We met in London on the 23rd, 24th and 25th March, and examined Mr. Frederick Harrison, General Manager of the London and North Western Railway Company, upon these proposals, and after a friendly conference and interchange of views, he, on receiving our explanations, agreed on behalf of the Company, for a sum of £8,500 a year, (1) to run the mail train from Euston at 8.30 a.m. to connect with the mail packet at Holyhead, provided the 7.15 a.m. mail was discontinued. (2) To run a train at 7 a.m. from Euston which would "not be a postal train under notice" (*i.e.* would not be under the control of the Post Office), but would be available to convey mails. (3) To run the up mail train from Holyhead at 11.52 a.m. instead of 11.22 a.m. and to reach London the same time as at present, thus giving a land acceleration in both directions of half an hour. The Post Office being of opinion they could not have the mails for the English provincial towns ready to be forwarded by the 7 a.m. from Euston, or earlier than 7.15 a.m., and having intimated that if the train could be started at 7.15 a.m. all Postal objections to the general acceleration would be removed; the London and North Western Company were again approached, and in order to remove all barriers to the carrying out of the scheme forthwith they at once undertook to run a train at 7.15 a.m.

It is only due to that Company to acknowledge the valuable assistance received from their General Manager throughout, in disposing of the difficulties with which we had to deal in connection with the general question.

For the promotion of tourist traffic in connection with these arrangements the Company will also be prepared to improve its own service with the North Wall steamers, running in both directions express trains equal in speed to the Mails.

As regards the journey by sea, it should be stated that the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company have agreed to accelerate 15 minutes in each direction between Holyhead and Dublin, to maintain the through connections, thus securing a saving in all of 45 minutes in each direction between London and Dublin.

Having thus briefly summarised our proceedings, and stated the opportunities which are available, we proceed to answer *seriatim* the questions addressed to us:—

1. To meet as far as possible the wishes of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and of the deputation of Irish Members of Parliament who waited upon the Postmaster General in July, 1897, and in view of the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1853, the mail should leave Euston at 8.30 a.m., gain half an hour on its way to Holyhead, a further 15 minutes in crossing the Channel, and arrive in Dublin half an hour later than at present. With the

co-operation of the Irish Railway Companies, which has been freely offered, this will secure the existing connections with the trains out of Dublin. The return mail from Dublin should leave Kingstown 45 minutes later than the present contract time, and being accelerated 15 minutes by sea and 30 minutes by land, would reach London at the same time as at present.

The following is the extract from the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons of 1853, herein referred to:—

"A proposal has been made for the establishment of a mail by the morning express trains leaving London and Dublin at 8.30 or 9 a.m. respectively, and your Committee are of opinion that great advantages would result from its adoption." (This proposal to leave at 8.30 a.m. could not then be carried into effect, as the mail from London would not arrive in Dublin in sufficient time to catch the trains for the provinces.)

2. Such acceleration might not, on a balance of advantages and disadvantages, be imperative on purely Postal grounds, but it has to be borne in mind that the conveyance of mails between England and Ireland has invariably been considered conjointly with the passenger transit arrangements.

All Postal difficulties having been removed, the benefits which will be immediately secured for the mail service are as follows:—

(a) Relieving the congestion of Postal work in London, to which the Post Office Officials attached so much importance during the Inquiry, by the Irish Mail leaving at 8.30 instead of 7.15.

(b) Affording more facilities not only to London but to towns along the entire route between London and Holyhead as well as the cross country services, and also those tourists resorts in North Wales with which Ireland has now such extensive connection, by giving longer time for the despatch of letters and for replying to the correspondence of previous nights, thus improving more or less the English Postal arrangements proper, as well as those in connection with Ireland. The same advantages apply with respect to the up journey, and apart from any immediate advantages it may be safely accepted that in due course substantial benefits will accrue to the Postal Service where an important acceleration of trains of this nature has been effected.

3. The stoppages should be at Rugby, Crewe, and Chester, in both directions.

4. As stated, the sums asked by the London and North Western Railway Company were: (i.) for an increased acceleration of half an hour each way between London and Holyhead, £16,627 a year; (ii.) for an increased acceleration of forty-five minutes each way between London and Holyhead, £19,377 a year. The sum now proposed is £6,500, as against £16,627, for an acceleration of half an hour each way between London and Holyhead, and for a train by which the continental mails can be forwarded from London in the morning to Liverpool, Manchester, and the English provincial towns.

5. The representative of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company stated in his evidence that the Company had anticipated a change of this character at the time of their tender, and had taken it into account in naming their price. The Government has now abandoned the principle of partnership in the receipts from passenger traffic, and has accepted a fixed sum. As we are unable to controvert the evidence tendered by the Company, we do not see our way to recommend a variation of this sum under the present condition, more especially as, to assist in carrying out the arrangement, the Company have agreed to give an acceleration of 15 minutes on the sea passage each way, free of charge, which may be taken as equivalent to a considerable contribution in money.

6. See No. 2. All the present connections with the Irish Mail trains will be maintained and materially improved generally. The charge for any alterations necessary to maintain existing connections is included in the sum of £6,500.

7. As will be seen from the print of the proceedings attached, we have received evidence from the officers of the Post Office as to the effect of the alterations upon the mails. We have given due weight to their observations.

As regards convenience, the mail trains start at an inconveniently early hour for passengers. This defect would be remedied as shown in answer to Question 1. The trains will be all well appointed, including breakfast and dining arrangements and lavatory accommodation, and the boats are also large, powerful, and comfortably provided both on the mail and the North Wall routes. In Ireland itself, the railway companies are prepared to co-operate actively in opening up the country and making the new services a success by providing more convenient passenger transit, tourist tickets at reduced rates, through bookings, breakfast, dining, and lavatory cars, in addition to hotel accommodation at different points of attraction upon their routes.

8. We are agreed as to the advisability of securing a fast and convenient passenger service between England and Ireland.

Although the reference to the Committee did not embrace the general question of better travelling facilities and the adjustment of fares and passenger arrangements in Ireland, it was apparent to the Committee before the inquiry had proceeded to any extent that the opportunity thus presented for dealing with such an important matter should be taken advantage of. This has been attended with the most satisfactory results, the various railway and steamboat companies having met the Committee most willingly, and at once agreed to assist them by every means in their power in the opening up of Ireland, not only as a tourist resort but for general traffic; and the advantages to be derived from this will be extensive and valuable.

All witnesses are unanimous with regard to the proposed down service from London, and the same remark is applicable to the up service, except as regards Cork and Londonderry, the passengers from which by the night mails are landed in Dublin between the hours of two and five o'clock in the morning. They would naturally desire to be sent forward direct, but this objection can be overcome by arranging to have sleeping accommodation on board the steamers, which the City of Dublin Company is prepared to provide.

At the examination of witnesses in Dublin, the Manager of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company undertook (*see* Question 808) to put on a through train from Dublin in the evening in connection with the proposed new service which would give direct transit for passengers and Mails for the south, thus enabling passengers from England to reach stations all the way to Cork on the same day. All the railway companies having termini in Dublin will be prepared to send their trains to Kingstown Pier to convey passengers to and from the mail steamers direct to and from the provinces.

The accelerating and improving of travelling facilities between large centres having always been attended with the most satisfactory results, and the drawing of England and Ireland closer together by the better part of an hour being of such importance for the opening up and development of the latter, and particularly having regard to the other important facilities contingent thereon which are offered by the Irish companies, we beg to recommend strongly the adoption of the accelerated service for £6,500 per annum already referred to, and that the same should be put into operation for the coming tourist season.

It may be added that, consequent upon the carrying out of this scheme, the concessions which the railway and steamboat companies are prepared to make represent an amount largely in excess of the cost of the proposed acceleration.

In conclusion, we desire to express our appreciation of the able and efficient manner in which Mr. Henry Higgs has discharged his duties as Secretary to the Committee.

THOS. ROBERTSON.
PATRICK O'BRIEN.

HENRY HIGGS, *Secretary*.
17th May, 1898.

REPORT (No. 2) SIGNED BY MR. T. E. SIFTON AND MR. T. L. HEATH.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIPS,

By Treasury Letter of the 6th December 1897 we were appointed, with Mr. T. Robertson, Chairman of the Board of Works, Ireland, and Mr. P. O'Brien, M.P., as a Committee to enquire:

- "1. To what extent, and in what way, the Irish Day Mail train service can be accelerated.
- "2. Whether such acceleration is desirable on postal grounds.
- "3. What number of stoppages should be required, and at what places.
- "4. What will be the probable cost of any acceleration which the Committee may propose.
- "5. If such acceleration should involve increased expense, what portion, if any, of such increased expense should fairly be borne by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, as benefiting through the alteration by the transfer to their boats of traffic now carried by other vessels."

The Treasury Letter adds:

- "6. The Committee should further consider in any recommendation which they may make for alteration of hours of the Day Mail to and from Ireland, what effect such alteration will have on the mails in other parts of the United Kingdom, and whether it will sever the connections which the Irish Mail Train now maintains with places either to the south or to the north of the main line; whether the effect of these alterations will place any towns or districts under new inconveniences, either as regards passengers or mails, and, if so, whether such inconveniences can be either removed or reduced by corresponding alterations in other train services, and at what cost.
- "7. Before recommending any alterations, the Committee should ascertain from the proper officers of the Post Office, the effect of such alterations on the working of the mails generally, and should attach due weight to any reasonable objection which may be raised by those officers.
- "8. In the event of the Committee reporting that no acceleration of the Mail Train is desirable, my Lords would be glad if they would consider how far it is advisable to secure a faster and more convenient passenger service irrespective of postal considerations."

After the conclusion of the evidence of witnesses, and during the discussion which followed, it became apparent that the divergence of our views from those of our colleagues was so great as to preclude the possibility of the Committee's arriving at an agreement on the matters referred to us; and we considered that, in the circumstances, we should best discharge our duty under the reference by drawing up a separate report as follows:

The existing arrangements for the Irish Mail Service commenced on the 1st April 1897, when a new contract with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company took effect, by which the time allowed for the sea service between Holyhead and Kingstown was reduced to 3 hours 37 minutes for the outward journey, and 3 hours 32 minutes for the inward journey, including transfers both at Holyhead and Kingstown. The subsidy until 31st March 1917 is 100,000*l.* a year, and thenceforward 80,000*l.* a year; but the Company pay the Postmaster General a fixed sum of 2,000*l.* a year in lieu of the share of the passenger receipts which had been deducted from the annual subsidy under previous contracts. The contract extends to 31st March 1917, or thereafter subject to 12 months' notice.

The Night Mail Trains between Euston and Holyhead were at the same time accelerated by half an hour in each direction at a cost of 5,150*l.* a year payable in addition to the sum of 63,000*l.* a year which the London and North Western Railway Company were already receiving under a contract of the 29th September 1883. The latter contract remains in force except in so far as it is modified by the agreement for the acceleration referred to, which has not been embodied in a formal contract.

As stated in the last paragraph, the acceleration between Euston and Holyhead which came into operation on the 1st April 1897 was confined to the Night Mail Trains, the advantages of accelerating the Day Mail Trains not being held, from the Postmaster General's point of view, to warrant the additional outlay which would have been involved. The decision gave rise to many expressions of disappointment, and on the 13th July 1897 a deputation of 68 Irish Members of Parliament waited upon the Postmaster General and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and represented the importance of developing tourist traffic in Ireland and, generally, of opening up the country by means of improved communications with England. The Morning Mails leaving Euston at 7.15 a.m. and Dublin at 7.35 a.m. (English time) were represented to be too early for tourists, and a request was put forward for a departure at about 8.30 a.m. from Euston and Kingstown respectively (a departure from Kingstown at 8.30 a.m. involving a departure from Dublin at 8.5 a.m., English time), and for an acceleration of the Day Mail Trains between Euston and Holyhead equal to that which had been effected in the case of the night mail trains. A similar suggestion had already been made by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce; and your Lordships decided to appoint a Committee with the terms of reference above noted.

The evidence tendered to us during our sittings in Dublin by representatives of public bodies in Ireland and by other witnesses disclosed, as regards the time for the despatch of the morning mail from Dublin to London, a difference of opinion. While Dublin was in favour of the despatch of the steamer from Kingstown at 8.30 a.m. (English time), instead of 8.0 a.m., to suit the convenience of passengers, another proposal was made on behalf of Cork, which was also favoured by Derry and Newry, that, instead of a later departure from Dublin in the morning, there should be a departure very much earlier than at present (say at 3 a.m.), in connection with an acceleration of the Night Mail Train from the South of Ireland.

We may say at once, as regards the proposal of the Cork Chamber of Commerce, that it could not be adopted without accelerating, at enormous cost all the Night Mail Trains from the provinces into Dublin, and, in fact, recasting the Night Mail Service of the whole country. The advantage after all, even postally, is problematical; for it would probably be found that an earlier departure from Dublin than 5 a.m. would not in any case be practicable, and the result would be an arrival in London about 3 p.m., and not at midday as contemplated, with an actual delivery of the letters too late for business purposes.

With reference to the proposed later departure from London, we found that the present Mail, arriving in Dublin at 4.52 p.m. (Irish time), 5.17 p.m. (English time), connected with an important train leaving Dublin on the Great Northern Railway at 5.30 p.m. (Irish time) for Belfast, and that a later arrival might seriously imperil this connection. There is difficulty in keeping the train back in Dublin beyond 5.30 p.m. owing to the importance of the passenger connections on the branch lines, as well as the connection with the Scotch Mail Steamer from Belfast, which carries mails from Ireland to Scotland, and leaves Belfast at 9.30 p.m., half an hour after the arrival of the Great Northern Train at that city. The Earl of Kilmorey, the Earl of Rathdonnell, and other residents in the North of Ireland impressed upon us the necessity of maintaining the connection with this 5.30 p.m. train.

While we were in Dublin we took evidence also from various Post Office witnesses. A summary of this evidence is given below in that portion of our report which deals with heads 6 and 7 of the reference to us.

We next applied to the London and North Western Railway for estimates of the cost: (1) of running a fast accelerated Mail Train from Euston to Holyhead, starting at 8.30 a.m., in addition to maintaining the present 7.15 a.m. train as far as Crewe; and (2) of accelerating the Up Day Mail Train from Holyhead to Euston. The Company stated that the cost would be as follows:—

(1) Down Mail Train:

(a) With acceleration of 30 minutes—		
Additional mileage at 4s. 6d. per mile	-	£ 11,127 a year
Accelerated speed	-	2,750 "
		<hr/> 13,877 "
(b) With acceleration of 45 minutes—		
Additional mileage at 4s. 6d. per mile	-	11,127 "
Accelerated speed	-	4,125 "
		<hr/> 15,252

(2) Up Mail Train :	£
(a) Acceleration of 30 minutes - - - -	2,750 a year
(b) Acceleration of 45 minutes - - - -	4,125 „
making, for both trains—	
(a) With 30 minutes' acceleration - - - -	16,627 „
(b) With 45 minutes' acceleration - - - -	19,377 „

We met in London on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th March to examine Mr. F. Harrison, General Manager of the London and North Western Railway Company, upon the Company's proposals, and in the course of discussion he threw out, for consideration, a suggestion for a less costly arrangement as follows :—

(1) That the 7.15 a.m. Mail Train from Euston should leave at 8.30 a.m. for Holyhead, stopping at Rugby, Crewe, and Chester, and arriving at the Admiralty Pier at 2.13 p.m., the time suggested under the scheme for which he was first asked to name a price.

(2) That the 11.22 a.m. Up Irish Mail should leave Holyhead Pier at 11.52 a.m., stopping at Chester, Crewe, and Rugby—possibly also at Willesden—and arrive at Euston at 5.45 p.m., as now.

(3) That the 7.30 a.m. passenger train, Euston to Manchester, should be altered to leave at 7 a.m., and maintain the arrivals north of Crewe of the present 7.15 a.m. Postal Train, but not itself to be a Postal Train under notice.

The cost of these arrangements would be 6,500*l.* a year, made up of 5,500*l.* for the acceleration of the Irish Day Mail Trains, and 1,000*l.* for the adaptation of existing services.

Turning now to the several points in the terms of reference, we think that it will be most convenient to deal first with heads 6 and 7, relating to possible difficulties and inconveniences, to the Postal Service and otherwise, which might attend the adoption of the scheme for an accelerated Irish Day Mail Service with departures at 8.30 a.m. from Euston and Kingstown respectively.

The following is a summary of the evidence of the Post Office witnesses on this aspect of the subject :—

A departure of the Down Day Mail from Euston at 8.30 a.m., instead of at 7.15 a.m., coupled with an acceleration of the train between Euston and Holyhead by half an hour, would result in a later arrival at Dublin by three-quarters of an hour. This would involve a postponement of the delivery of the English letters from 5.40 p.m. to 6.25 p.m. in the city, and from 6 p.m. to 6.45 p.m. in the suburbs. It is stated by the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and other witnesses that this postponement would not be objected to by the public; but some complaints would no doubt arise, and the opportunity of replying to urgent letters the same night would in great measure be lost. It would be necessary to re-establish the former delivery in the City districts, for which 35,000 letters a week are ready at 5.20 p.m., and to employ extra force to prevent the parcels from England which reach Dublin by a train from Kingstown subsequent to the Mail Train from missing delivery in Dublin the same night and (what is of equal importance) the night despatches to the provinces. The additional cost of dealing with the English Mail in Dublin under the altered conditions would be about £1,100 a year. The facilities given last Spring to more than 30 places around Dublin in respect to their Day Mail correspondence from England would be lost or rendered unreliable.

The Irish Mail Train, if it left Euston at 8.30 a.m., would be quite unsuitable for the English and Scotch Mails which are now conveyed by the 7.15 a.m. train, that is, the mails for places all along the London and North Western lines from London to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and from Crewe to Holyhead, including Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Wigan, Preston, the Furness district, North Wales, &c. We may say that for England and Scotland there are forwarded from London alone by the 7.15 a.m. train no fewer than 152,000 letters a week.

These Mails are of such importance, including as they do the letters from the Continent arriving in London early in the morning, that the maintenance of a train from Euston to Crewe and of the connections North of Crewe at practically

the present hours is absolutely necessary for mail purposes. The North Wales district would not suffer very materially from the withdrawal of the 7.15 a.m. train, as between Crewe and Holyhead, provided the Company's stopping train from Crewe to Holyhead at 11 a.m. should continue to run; but the Company can give no assurance as to the continuance of this 11 a.m. train beyond Chester; and, should the district between Chester and Holyhead be left dependent on the Irish Mail Train at the proposed altered hours, not only will the deliveries be made later, but parcels will necessarily be excluded, as the Irish Mail Train makes no stops between Chester and Holyhead, and parcels cannot, like the letters, be put out of the train by apparatus.

As regards the Up Day Mail from Ireland, a despatch from Dublin half an hour later than at present, viz. at 8.5 a.m. (English time) instead of 7.35 a.m., would have an unfavourable effect at certain places in North Wales, as it would necessitate the postponement of the deliveries into which the Irish letters fall by about half an hour. The Mail would arrive at Liverpool and Birmingham 20 minutes later than at present, and at Manchester 22 minutes later. Extra expense would be necessary in Liverpool to avoid delay to the Town delivery by postmen; the delivery to callers would in any case be delayed, which would produce complaints from persons interested in the Irish provision trade, who rent private letter-boxes on purpose to enable them to obtain their Irish letters at the earliest possible moment before the closing of business for the afternoon; letters for the suburbs would be delayed, and despatches to neighbouring towns would be missed. At Manchester the Irish letters would fall into a delivery $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours later than at present, and too late for business purposes, unless arrangements could be made for dealing with the letters on the journey at a cost which it is difficult to estimate, but which must be very considerable. There are for Liverpool by this Mail about 14,000 letters a week, and for Manchester 12,400. At Birmingham 4,800 letters would miss a delivery for which they are now just in time.

There would be the further disadvantage that the connection between the Up Irish Day Mail and the 10 a.m. train from Euston to the North now effected via Warrington and Preston would be lost, throwing out 23,000 letters a week.

In any alteration of the Up Day Mail it is essential that the arrival at Euston should not be made later than at present, as the pressure of the evening sorting duty at the General Post Office is such that, with a later arrival than 5.45 p.m. at Euston, the due despatch of the Irish letters by the outgoing night mails to the Continent and elsewhere would not be ensured.

The above statement shows that the alteration of the Irish Day Mail trains desired by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and the Deputation to the Postmaster-General, while it might result in more acceptable hours for passenger traffic, would materially impair the mail service in many directions, even though arrangements should be made with the railway company for maintaining the 7.15 a.m. train as between London and Crewe. It would also involve additional outlay, as has been shown, quite apart from the payment to the railway company. Two slight advantages would arise from the despatch of the Irish Mail from London being postponed until 8.30 a.m., namely, that a longer interval would be secured in London in which to deal with correspondence for Ireland coming in from abroad by the night mails, and in the provinces a somewhat later hour of posting for Ireland would be obtained; but these advantages would be far outweighed by the postal disadvantages elsewhere.

As to the practicability of substituting a despatch from Euston for English and Scotch purposes at 7 a.m. for the existing despatch at 7.15 a.m., the Committee examined Mr. Badcock, the Controller of the London postal service. It was elicited from him that the present interval between the arrival of the Night Mail from the Continent, due at Cannon Street at 5.30 a.m., and the despatch of the Mail from Euston at 7.15 a.m. is not more than sufficient for Post Office purposes, having regard to the average lateness of the Continental Mail and the amount of sorting to be done at the General Post Office, and that there would, with present arrangements, be a breakdown if the interval were reduced by 15 minutes. A large amount of the sorting is already undertaken on the railway between Dover and London, three sorting carriages being run in the train, and a force of no less than 26 men being employed therein. To increase the accommodation to such an extent as to allow of the foreign Mails coming into London completely sorted, it would be necessary to employ additional

force, estimated at 20 sorters, and two or three additional sorting carriages. The additional sorters would cost, for wages and trip allowances, about £3,000 a year, and for the additional sorting carriages, possibly involving the running of an extra engine with the train, the Company would certainly demand additional payment, which cannot be set down at less than £2,000 or £2,500 a year.

Mr. Harrison's suggestion, therefore, while apparently avoiding the necessity for an additional train from Euston to Crewe, would have involved costly arrangements for performing on the railway journey between Dover and London the whole of the sorting of the Continental correspondence for the Day Mail despatches from the metropolis.

An alternative has since been suggested, namely, that the departure from Euston at 7.15 a.m. should be preserved, but that the arrival at Crewe and at places north thereof should be a little later than at present, perhaps by 10 minutes. We fear that a later arrival even to this small extent would be very inconvenient in many quarters, but at Liverpool any diminution of the already brief interval available for replying to Continental letters would certainly provoke loud complaint.

But, whether the present 7.30 a.m. train is altered to 7.0 or 7.15 a.m. in the manner proposed, we should further point out that the condition attached by Mr. Harrison to his offer, viz., that the train shall not be under Post Office control, deprives the offer of much of its value, for, although he states that there is not much likelihood of the Company's making any material alteration of hours, and although the Company would give three months' notice before making any such alteration, the department would have no guarantee of permanence (and that in respect to a train for which it would at any rate be paying 1,000*l.* a year). Mr. Harrison was asked whether he would agree to continue the train concurrently with the general contract, which has only about 2½ more years to run, but he could give no promise to this effect. His view was that, if the train was altered by the Company in a manner inconvenient to the Postal Service, the Postmaster General had his remedy; he could put the train under notice and pay for it as a Notice Train.

In the course of our proceedings an offer by telegram was received from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company to afford 15 minutes' acceleration on the Day Mail passages in both directions, although they would come under no contract obligation in the matter. The offer arose out of the difficulty that was foreseen in securing a connection in Dublin between the Day Mail from Euston and the present 5.30 p.m. train to Belfast, which is of value both for passenger and mail purposes. The Great Northern of Ireland Railway Company might also, we have reason to think, postpone the departure of the 5.30 p.m. train until 5.45 p.m. with the same object. If it should be decided to accelerate the Day Mail trains in the manner suggested, the offer of the City of Dublin Company might, we think, be accepted so far as regards the voyage from Holyhead to Kingstown; for, in fair weather and with a mail of average size to deal with, the Company could probably manage to perform their work in less than the contract time, and, to the extent to which time was saved, the connection with the 5.30 p.m. train would be made more secure. The arrangement would, however, by reducing the length of the voyage, reduce the time for sorting on board the packet, and some difficulty might in this way be created, leading to additional expenditure. We do not advise that the Company's offer should be taken advantage of in the other direction, because, if the departure from Kingstown were fixed 15 minutes later in the expectation of the voyage being shortened by the same amount of time, it would happen, whenever the expected saving of time was not effected, that the train from Holyhead to London would be kept waiting and irregularity would be introduced into the train service on this side. Unless the Packet Company are prepared to come under contract to effect a quicker passage by 15 minutes, we are of opinion that no change in the time allowed for the sea passage and transfers on the up journey should be attempted.

Our conclusions on the specific questions put to us are as follows:—

1. A saving of half an hour between London and Holyhead in each direction represents the extent to which acceleration of the Irish Day Mail Trains is really practicable. This amount of acceleration would bring up the speed of the day trains to that of the accelerated Night Trains now running, and would meet the wishes expressed by the Deputation of July last.

The maximum amount of time by which the departure of the Irish Day Mail from London and Dublin respectively could be postponed is governed by two considerations:

(1) the importance of maintaining the connection of the Day Mail from London with certain afternoon trains from Dublin to the provinces, especially the present 5.30 p.m. to Belfast (the departure of which, however, might possibly be somewhat postponed by the Great Northern Railway Company of Ireland, without breaking the connection with the Mail Steamer from Belfast to Ardrossan),

(2) the necessity of maintaining the present time of arrival of the Up Irish Day Mail at Euston, viz., 5.45 p.m., since no shorter interval than at present between the arrival of this train at Euston and the despatch of the Continental and Night Mails generally would suffice for the work which has to be done at the General Post Office.

It follows from these considerations that the latest possible departures for the Irish Day Mail would be 8.30 from London and Kingstown respectively (English time in both cases). The adoption of these times, with the half-hour's acceleration on the railway journey, is possible, but the Post Office ought at the same time to be secured the permanent use, for Mail purposes, of a train from Euston to Crewe, leaving Euston not earlier than 7.15 a.m., and arriving at Crewe at the same time as the present 7.15 train.

2. Such an acceleration of the Irish Day Mail Trains is not desirable on postal grounds.

3. The Irish Day Mail Trains should in any case stop at Rugby, Crewe, and Chester, on both the up and the down journey.

4. We do not see our way to recommend any acceleration of the Irish Day Mail Trains; but it may be convenient, for purposes of easy reference, to note here the estimated cost of the three alternative schemes for such acceleration which have been described above.

(a.) For the complete scheme, including an 8.30 departure from Euston and Kingstown respectively, with half an-hour's acceleration on the railway journey, and the maintenance of the present 7.15 a.m. Mail Train from London to Crewe.

Estimate of London & North Western Railway Company	£.
Extra cost in the Dublin Post Office	16,627 a year
	1,100 "
	<u>£17,727 "</u>

(b.) For the accelerated 8.30 Mail Train as in (a), but with a non-Notice train at 7.0 a.m. from Euston, taking the place of the present 7.15, and maintaining the present arrivals north of Crewe.

Estimate of London & North Western Railway Company	£.
Probable cost of additional sorters on the Continental train from Dover to London	6,500 a year
Probable cost of additional carriage accommodation on the Continental train	3,000 "
Extra cost in Dublin as above	2,000 to 2,500 "
	1,100 "
	<u>£12,600 to 13,100 "</u>

(c.) For the accelerated 8.30 Mail Train as in (a), but with a non-Notice train at 7.15 a.m. from Euston, taking the place of the present 7.15, and arriving at places north of Crewe as much possibly as ten minutes later than at present, the probable cost would be £7,600 a year, that is, the same as under (b), without the additional expense for sorting between London and Dover.

But it must be remembered, as regards both (b) and (c), that, in the event of an alteration by the Railway Company of the non-Notice train referred to, the Post

Office might at any time find it necessary to establish a Notice Train in place of it, in which case the additional cost might be any sum up to 11,127*l.* a year, the amount named by the Railway Company for maintaining the present 7.15 a.m. Mail Train from Euston to Crewe, in addition to the proposed 8.30 a.m. Irish Day Mail.

The foregoing estimates do not take into account the expense that would have to be incurred in Liverpool and Manchester unless the Up Irish Day Mail letters for each place were to be held over for the next delivery.

5. The representative of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company stated in his evidence that the Company had anticipated such a change as we have been considering at the time when they made their tender, and had taken it into account in naming their price. Even if it were now practicable to obtain from them a contribution towards the cost of such a scheme, we have no data on which to assess the amount that they might fairly be asked to pay.

It remains only to consider the last question put to us.

8. While admitting the desirability of encouraging convenient and rapid communication between England and Ireland, we are of opinion that to subsidize a Railway Company for a purely passenger service, irrespective of Mail considerations, would be a new departure which could not fail to be productive of embarrassment in dealing with mail services in the future; and we hold that improvements for purely passenger purposes should, as heretofore, be left to the enterprise of the companies concerned, who would reap any profits accruing from such improved services.

In the present case it has been shown that the proposed alteration of the Day Mail trains between Euston and Holyhead would, on the whole, be decidedly detrimental to the mail service; the alteration would therefore be inconsistent with the principle laid down in the Treasury Minute of 19th October 1855, which, while not ignoring other considerations, laid stress on "the paramount importance of the Postal Service," as recognised by the Legislature when passing the Act of the previous Session, and expressed the view that, in order to justify such a public expenditure as would insure the quickest possible communication between England and Ireland twice a day, it was imperative that some great advantage in postal arrangements should be gained.

Nor, in our opinion, is there anything in the existing conditions as regards passenger communication between England and Ireland to warrant a departure from a principle so forcibly expressed and so consistently followed hitherto. All the companies concerned are fully alive, as shown in the evidence given by their representatives, to the importance of encouraging passenger traffic, and especially tourist traffic, by increased facilities and conveniences for travel. In illustration of this fact we may refer briefly to the services actually existing at the present time and contemplated in the immediate future. The night services between London and Dublin give the choice of two routes (namely *viâ* Kingstown and *viâ* North Wall) with departures at convenient times in both directions, and by express trains running between London and Holyhead with few stops and at high speed averaging about 30 miles an hour between stations. By day there is a similar alternative to the Mail route in the London and North Western Railway Company's service leaving London and Dublin at 9.30 and 9.15 respectively, hours which even now are as convenient for passengers as could be wished; and we were given to understand that these services were likely to be further accelerated in time for the tourist season this year, so as to be as rapid as the corresponding night services, and to arrive in Dublin and London at convenient times. When this is done, the service between London and Dublin as a whole will bear comparison with any other in the kingdom. Further, the down Day Mail train is already convenient enough as to hours for the intermediate stopping places on the route, and, as regards London, the hour of departure could not in any event be made as convenient as the alternative service at 9.30 or any later hour at which the Company may fix the departure.

It is therefore a question whether the beneficial results of the change from 7.15 to 8.30, in the encouragement of tourist traffic to Ireland, would be at all commensurate with the expense involved by any of the alternative schemes. On this point we would refer to the expert evidence of Mr. Harrison, the general manager of the London and North Western Railway. He expressed the opinion that there is no advantage from a tourist point of view in running an 8.30 train from Euston in the morning, that to run such an 8.30 train all the year round would not be a good com-

mercial arrangement, and, in fact, that to carry out the latter scheme would be "a waste of money." Seeing that this evidence was given on behalf of the London and North Western Railway Company, which would receive all the increased subsidy and much the largest proportion of the profits of any increased traffic, we cannot but attach the greatest weight to it.

The same considerations apply to the proposed departure from Dublin at 8.5 English time (instead of 7.35); and it must further be remembered that, while Dublin is in favour of the later departure, the feeling of the provinces of Ireland (as shown by the evidence tendered to us) is largely against a change in this direction. We need only refer, in illustration, to the evidence of Mr. Green, representing the Cork Chamber of Commerce, who maintained that the change would make the Night Mail from the provinces of Ireland (connecting with the Morning Mail from Dublin), which is now of some service as regards certain places in England, *e.g.*, Liverpool and Manchester, "absolutely useless."

To sum up, we are unable to find any ground or justification for imposing on the general taxpayer a heavy charge for the purpose of making an alteration in the Irish Day Mails which would be distinctly injurious to the Postal Service, and which, as regards one half of it (the Day Mail from Dublin to England), is opposed or regarded with indifference by the provinces of Ireland, though desired by Dublin and its immediate neighbourhood.

T. E. SIFTON.

T. L. HEATH.

HENRY HIGGS, *Secretary*.

17th May, 1898.

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COMMISSIONED ON THIRSDAY 27TH 1894

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OF THE

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APPOINTED BY THE TREASURY TO ENQUIRE INTO THE ACCELERATION

OF THE

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



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